



Bley House News

Dorset Historical Society

Spring 2009 A Quarterly Newsletter

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Museum Winter Hours

10 AM - 12 noon
Wednesday though Friday
10AM-2PM Saturday
& by appointment
802-867-0331
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info@dorsetvthistory.org
www.dorsetvthistory.org

Letter from the President

As the new year begins, we at the Dorset Historical Society invite all who receive this newsletter and their friends to join us at the Bley House for the interesting and original programs we are planning for this year. In addition to the Society's scheduled events, a visit to the Bley House will also refresh your appreciation for the rich and varied history of our town as it is depicted in changing exhibits as well as in the permanent collections of art and artifacts, letters, books, maps and historical records acquired by the Dorset Historical Society since its establishment forty-five years ago..

We believe the new direction and increased activity at the Dorset Historical Society is also a result of the renovation of the Bley House museum, the continuing state-of-the-art museum display and preservation initiatives, the support by enthusiastic volunteers and the addition of a professional part-time curator. Hours of operation have increased, and we are particularly pleased that this past year was a record.

Bley House Museum and the Dorset Historical Society belong to the Dorset community and will continue to provide enjoyment and education to all our visitors. Whether you come as a member or perhaps as a volunteer candidate, we believe you will be rewarded by participating in the increased vitality and interest in the history of Dorset that has been fostered by your Society.

Looking forward to seeing you here,

Richard Hittle, President



Miles Bowen workshop from Luxbrush Painting, Manchester: L to R. Miles Bowen. Kris Kuebler, Travis Senecal, and Nadine Connors, workshop participant from Bondville (see P. 3)

The Curator's Notebook

Since I began at the Dorset Historical Society Bley House Museum, my main charge has been getting to know the collection, which encompasses all that is on exhibition and all that is in our collection storage areas. This is a complex and multi-layered process that will be ongoing for some time and as I progress I continue to be impressed by the scope of the collection and the diversity of histories represented it. I have a passion for collections as I think all curators do so although I find the work challenging it is also a great pleasure. I am learning all the time and hope that ultimately my work will add a new dimension to the collective memory of those who live in Dorset and those who visit.

I am approaching this learning curve in three different ways: by keeping up with new acquisitions; by launching a complete inventory of the collection; and by undertaking new exhibitions for some of the galleries. Exhibitions involve extensive research but finally putting them together and installing them is a very creative effort because it involves the interpretation of the materials, which hopefully provides meaning for many different audiences.

During 2008, we had approximately seventy donations to the collection. All have been important but I will mention a few here that I think speak particularly to the "diversity" in our acquisitions. We received from the Berkshire Bank a large framed 1856 Rice and Hardwood map of Bennington County with insert maps of towns and villages, engravings of important buildings and landmarks, statistical data and a business directory by town. A large gravestone rubbing of Henrietta Jackson Hamlin's marker in Istanbul, Turkey given by the Hamlin family biographers, Malcolm and Marcia Stevens, inspired me to put together a small exhibit in the Main Gallery about this fascinating Dorset woman and her family. And Sue Washburn and I have been researching a treasure trove of letters and photographs that came to us from Sara O'Brien, the great great granddaughter of Samuel E. Rideout. He was born in Dorset, served in the Civil War and finally moved with his family first to Chicago and then to Ohio. His two daughters served at the Santee Mission in Nebraska, which was dedicated to the Mandan Sioux people of the area.

The complete inventory of the collection could take well over a year but in the long run it will provide valuable information and give us an opportunity to improve the way the collection is being stored. Many items will be re-housed in archival sleeves and boxes and this will be a good time to develop a conservation schedule for our significant regional paintings. One of our finest paintings, "Church Street – Dorset" by Edwin B. Childs, circa 1925, will be cleaned before the summer exhibit planned in conjunction with the hundred year anniversary celebration of the present United Congregational Church of Dorset and East Rupert.

I am privileged to be working with Kathie Wall Evans on our largest new exhibit for the 2009 season, which will focus on the artistry of Jessica Bond. Kathie was a longtime friend and protégé of Jessica's. The opening reception for the exhibition will be on Friday, May 29th, from 5:00-7:00 with a gallery talk by Kathie.

Susanne Rappaport, Curator

Cataloging the Collection

The Dorset Historical Society now has over 5000 items in the museum collection. New acquisitions are accessioned and cataloged as they are received, and previously acquired artifacts are currently being cataloged and entered in a PastPerfect database computer system. Data entry has now been completed for over 2500 items, and over 1300 of these have been entered in the catalog, or detailed portion, of the system.

This collection description and tracking process (accessioning, cataloging and computer entry) will be continued until the entire holdings of the museum (objects, photographs, documents, books, etc.) have been reviewed and documented. It is a time consuming but rewarding undertaking. If you are interested in joining in this necessary endeavor, please contact our curator, Susanne Rappaport, for details on how you can help.

SAVE THESE DATES:

- **Sundays April 19, 26, May 3 and May 17 "Introduction to Family History,"** a 4-session course on Genealogy with Linda French —Members \$40, non-Members \$50
- **Friday May 29th 5:00-7:00 PM Opening Reception "The Artistry of Jessica Bond: From Journeyman to Master"** FREE
- **Four Quarry Walks for Families** with Art Gilbert and Susanne Rappaport, Saturday June 27, July 18 & 25, August 8 FREE
- **Ice Cream Social** Saturday July 27, 1-4 PM —ice cream and family activities FREE



First acquisition of 2009—"Kent Hill—Home of J.H. Bowman with Cottages" - circa 1920
Given by Zorah Virginia Hester from Tucson, AZ

Genealogy Workshop

Kick off spring with our second seminar for 2009: "An Introduction to Family History" with Linda French. This 4-session series is designed to help individuals explore their past using the most expedient methods. The first, "Getting Started" (Apr. 19), followed by "Exploring Local Records" (Apr. 26), "Federal Records" (May 3), and last, "Utilizing Other Sources" (May 17), will be held at our Bley House Museum on Sunday afternoons from 2:00 to 3:30 PM. To insure continuity, attendance at all four sessions is recommended.

Linda is a long-time member, friend, and former curator at the Dorset Historical Society. She is a genealogist and holds a B.A. in History, has had a 25-year career as a research librarian and has been a volunteer at the Family History Center in Bennington since 1993.

Enrollment fee for the series, including materials: DHS members \$40; non-members, \$50. For more information or to enroll, please call Linda French at 802-362-3011.

We hope to continue these small informal seminar/workshops in 2010... but we need your input! What history-related subject would you like to explore, or do you know someone who would conduct a session? Please email your ideas to our DHS office, call Jean Kingston (802-867-4013), or email your ideas to jean@dovetailinn.com. Let us hear from you.

Please Join Us !

Volunteers are the backbone of the Dorset Historical Society. They range in age from High School students to Senior Citizens and include anyone with an interest in history and a desire to share it. Please call if you are interested in any of the following volunteer activities:

MUSEUM GUIDES

DATA ENTRY

SPECIAL EVENTS

WORKING ON COLLECTIONS WITH CURATOR

MANAGING THE GIFT SHOP

COMMITTEE SERVICE (many varied opportunities)

Miles Bowen on Historic American Paint colors

At two seminars in February, the Dorset Historical Society presented **Miles Bowen of Luxbrush Painting Co. of Manchester**, an expert in paint restoration, who joked that he's "had a colorful life." His subject was "Historic Colors in American Paint." Bowen's discussion included the history of color going back to the Romans and Egyptians as well as the concept of the color palette.

Closer to the contemporary scene, he explored the question of accurately matching the colors and texture of historic American finishes.

In his second program, Bowen examined the raw materials that went into American paints in earlier times and their sources, the content of those materials, and whether they can be replicated today. During the hands-on component of both seminars, participants worked on an individual sample board to produce a distressed finish, first choosing a color series to use, and painting on a base coat. At the subsequent meeting seminar-goers applied the final steps of distressing and glazing to their samples.

These seminars may be repeated at a later date if there is sufficient interest. Please call the Historical Society for more information.

Have You Noticed?

Our email address has changed to info@dorsetvthistory.org. Will you give us your email address? It will enable us to give you advance notice of special events, and will also save us postage. You may call or email us with your address. We will not share our list with individuals or other organizations.

Membership

MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

Yes, I want to join the Dorset Historical Society.

Please enroll me at the level indicated:

Enclosed is my check, *payable to Dorset Historical Society -Membership*

Membership Levels (please check one):

_____ Regular - \$35 _____ Supporter - \$50
_____ Sustaining - \$100 _____ Patron - \$250
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Mail to:

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